



OCT. 30, 2009

HEALTH UPDATE

North Dakota Department of Health Provides Update on N95 Masks

The following statement is being issued from State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

A public health emergency has been declared at the federal level regarding the H1N1 pandemic. The federal government has recognized a shortage of N95 masks as evidenced by the release of 75 percent of the federal emergency caches of the masks to the states. Worldwide demand for the masks has increased as a result of the H1N1 virus and medical providers throughout the country are unable to obtain N95 masks from manufacturers and distributors within normal and reasonable time frames. While manufacturers have increased production it will take an estimated four to 10 months to fill existing orders. The North Dakota Department of Health has provided N95 masks to health-care providers who have requested masks from the state and federal emergency caches.

Recent issuance of CDC respiratory guidelines in response to the H1N1 virus and the potential enforcement of those guidelines by OSHA during this time of emergency exacerbates the consumption of N95 masks. The North Dakota Department of Health believes that a shortage of N95 masks exists and encourages medical providers to take appropriate steps to conserve their consumption.

For more information, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health Operations Center at 701.328.1326.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.